REMARKS

The Applicant respectfully requests further examination and reconsideration in view of the arguments set forth fully below. Claims 1-44 were previously pending in this application. Within the Office Action, claims 1-44 have been rejected. Accordingly, claims 1-44 are currently pending in this application.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Within the Office Action, claims 1-44 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,253,188 issued to Witek et al. (hereafter "Witek"). The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Witek teaches a system and method for providing classified ads over the Internet. Internet users can connect to a Newspaper web server and central Web application server to search for and obtain classified ads. Ad records are stored in ad database servers 20 for providing classified ad records on request to application servers 16. To search the ad records, the search process is divided into two principle parts. The first part includes a system entry and pre-selection sequence, and the second part includes a record selection sequence (Witek, col. 12, lines 10-13). More specifically, in the first part the user enters the system and specifies the category of classified ads to be searched. Thereafter, as the user navigates to the respective selected category, the user further specifies a subcategory for the particular category selected (Witek, col. 12, lines 27-37). The selected category and subcategory pair is identified by a category/subcategory ID 46. The second part of the search process includes entering a formal record selection query containing the specific parameters for the ad records the user wishes to see. The specific parameters are entered as primary selection parameters 60 and as secondary selection parameters 62. In summary, the first part of the search process is limited to performing searches based on category, or in other words a hierarchical search (Witek, col. 13, lines 30-46). The second part of the search process is limited to performing searches based on entered parameters, in other words keyword search or parametric search.

Within the Office Action, it is stated that the Applicant does not claim that the parametric search method can be applied or limited to the first two levels of the hierarchical data structure.

The Applicant respectfully disagrees. In the previous response to Office Action, each of the independent claims were amended to include the limitation "performing a parametric search from any node within the directory tree structure" (emphasis added). Clearly, the limitation "any node" is applied to a node in the first level of a hierarchical data structure, the second level, and so on all the way to the lowest level of the hierarchical data structure. As such, the limitation "any node" does apply to the first two levels of the hierarchical data structure.

Also within the Office Action, it is stated that Witek does teach a parametric search. However, the Applicant contends that Witek does not teach a parametric search from any node within the hierarchical data structure. The parametric search of Witek is limited to application at the record selection query, which can only be applied to a previously determined category/subcategory level (as in the category/subcategory ID 46) within the hierarchical data structure. The Applicant specifically contends that Witek does not teach a parametric search as applied to the first two levels of the hierarchical data structure. The first level includes all categories, e.g. a top node, and the second level includes the individual categories, a node for each category. The claimed limitation of applying a parametric search to "any node" necessarily applies to the nodes in the first two levels of Witek. However, this is clearly not the case within Witek. Witek teaches that a parametric search is only applied once a category/subcategory pair have been specified. This clearly indicates that the parametric search of Witek is not applied at the top node, where neither a category nor a subcategory have yet to be specified, and the parametric search of Witek is not applied to the second level nodes (individual categories), where a category has been specified, but a subcategory has yet to be specified. To summarize, Witek does not teach applying a parametric search at any node within a hierarchical data structure.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a method of accessing information within a directory tree structure. The method of claim 1 comprises the steps of formatting a searchable database into the directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising a collection of related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, further wherein each specific node provides a corresponding set of parameters by which each related item of data corresponding to the specific node is defined by setting each parameter with a corresponding value associated with the data item, thereby forming a set parameter, accessing a particular node within the directory tree structure, setting one or more search parameters corresponding to the set of parameters of the particular node, and performing a parametric search from any node within

the directory tree structure using the one or more set search parameters corresponding to the particular node to match the one or more search parameters to the set parameters for each item of data corresponding to the particular node, thereby generating one or more matching discrete data items. As discussed above, Witek does not teach applying a parametric search at any node within a hierarchical data structure. For at least these reasons, the independent claim 1 is allowable over the teachings of Witek.

Claims 2-11 depend on the independent claim 1. As described above, the independent claim 1 is allowable over the teachings of Witek. Accordingly, claims 2-11 are all also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Independent claim 12 is directed to a research system for accessing information within a directory tree structure. The research system of claim 12 comprises means for formatting a searchable database into the directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising a collection of related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, further wherein each specific node provides a corresponding set of parameters by which each related item of data corresponding to the specific node is defined by setting each parameter with a corresponding value associated with the data item, thereby forming a set parameter, means for accessing a particular node within the directory tree structure, means for setting one or more search parameters corresponding to the set of parameters of the particular node, and means for performing a parametric search from any node within the directory tree structure using the one or more set search parameters corresponding to the particular node to match the one or more search parameters to the set parameters for each item of data corresponding to the particular node, thereby generating one or more matching discrete data items. As discussed above, Witek does not teach applying a parametric search at any node within a hierarchical data structure. For at least these reasons, the independent claim 12 is allowable over the teachings of Witek.

Claims 13-22 depend on the independent claim 12. As described above, the independent claim 12 is allowable over the teachings of Witek. Accordingly, claims 13-22 are all also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

Independent claim 23 is directed to a research system for accessing information within a directory tree structure. The research system of claim 23 comprises a research server configured to format a searchable database into the directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising a collection of related data and branches comprising links

between the nodes, further wherein each specific node provides a corresponding set of parameters by which each related item of data corresponding to the specific node is defined by setting each parameter with a corresponding value associated with the data item, thereby forming a set parameter, to access a particular node within the directory tree structure, to set one or more search parameters corresponding to the set of parameters of the particular node, and to perform a parametric search from any node within the directory tree structure using the one or more set search parameters corresponding to the particular node to match the one or more search parameters to the set parameters for each item of data corresponding to the particular node, thereby generating one or more matching discrete data items. As discussed above, Witek does not teach applying a parametric search at any node within a hierarchical data structure. For at least these reasons, the independent claim 23 is allowable over the teachings of Witek.

Claims 24-34 depend on the independent claim 23. As described above, the independent claim 23 is allowable over the teachings of Witek. Accordingly, claims 24-34 are all also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.
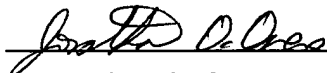
Independent claim 35 is directed to a network of devices for accessing information within a directory tree structure. The network of devices of claim 35 comprises one or more computer systems configured to establish a connection with other systems, and a a research server coupled to the one or more computer systems to format a searchable database into the directory tree structure, wherein the directory tree structure includes nodes comprising a collection of related data and branches comprising links between the nodes, further wherein each specific node provides a corresponding set of parameters by which each related item of data corresponding to the specific node is defined by setting each parameter with a corresponding value associated with the data item, thereby forming a set parameter, to access a particular node within the directory tree structure, to set one or more search parameters corresponding to the set of parameters of the particular node, and to perform a parametric search from any node within the directory tree structure using the one or more set search parameters corresponding to the particular node to match the one or more search parameters to the set parameters for each item of data corresponding to the particular node, thereby generating one or more matching discrete data items. As discussed above, Witek does not teach applying a parametric search at any node within a hierarchical data structure. For at least these reasons, the independent claim 35 is allowable over the teachings of Witek.

Claims 36-44 depend on the independent claim 35. As described above, the independent claim 35 is allowable over the teachings of Witek. Accordingly, claims 36-44 are all also allowable as being dependent on an allowable base claim.

For the reasons given above, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-44 are now in a condition for allowance, and allowance at an early date would be appreciated. Should the Examiner have any questions or comments, he/she is encouraged to call the undersigned attorney at (408) 530-9700.

Respectfully submitted,
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